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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 000868

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DEPT FOR U/S BURNS, AF A/Z NEWMAN/DAS WOODS  
OVP FOR NULAND  
NSC FOR ABRAMS, COURVILLE  
USAID FOR M. COPSON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/31/2010

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [Z1](#) [MDC](#)

SUBJECT: MDC HEAD PREVIEWS MEETING WITH AMBASSADOR FRAZER

Classified By: Ambassador Christopher W. Dell under Section 1.4 b/d

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Summary  
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1. MDC President Morgan Tsvangirai met with CDA June 21 to discuss his June 22-24 trip to South Africa and his meeting with Ambassador Frazier. Tsvangirai said the purpose of the trip was to meet with IRI,s communications expert and discuss the party,s message in the wake of another stolen election. He had decided to take advantage of the trip to meet the Ambassador and make an appeal for continued U.S. support. He planned to outline the MDC,s plans to confront the regime with non-violent acts of disobedience, beginning in July. Tsvangirai said he had no plans to meet with SAG representatives while in South Africa, but would meet with COSATU and SACP. End Summary.

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Pretoria Trip  
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2. (C) Tsvangirai said he was going to Pretoria to meet with IRI,s communications expert to discuss the party,s message and communications strategy in the wake of the stolen March 31 parliamentary elections and Operation Restore Order. He had decided to take advantage of the trip to meet Ambassador Frazier, given the published reports that she would be returning to Washington later this year in a senior AF position. He felt it was important to justify continued U.S. support, without which the political opposition in Zimbabwe would be severely hampered. He also said he planned to emphasize that despite recent setbacks, democracy in Zimbabwe remained attainable in the near-term.

3. (C) The CDA said that Tsvangirai should be prepared to explain to the Ambassador and other USG interlocutors what the MDC was preparing to do and why it had delayed taking action for so long following the elections and especially following the onset of Operation Restore Order. He added that U.S. support remained firm for the restoration of democracy in Zimbabwe, especially given the recent heinous behavior of the GOZ toward its own citizens. That said, the MDC would receive a more favorable U.S. reception in Washington D.C. and elsewhere once it had concrete actions it could point to.

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MDC &Ready to Act8  
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4. (C) Tsvangirai said the &delay8 in the MDC response had allowed the party to regroup and plot the way forward. The MDC,s &false subservience8 of the past three months would work to the party,s advantage by having lulled the government into a sense of complacency. Moreover, any loss of credibility with the populace would be quickly made up once the party was seen to be taking action. That said, he did acknowledge that the MDC had initially misunderstood the scope and severity of Operation Restore Order, believing it would be confined to attacks on the informal economy, and had failed to respond to it appropriately.

5. (C) Tsvangirai said the MDC had now settled on an initial six-month plan of action, to begin in early July and modeled on the successful revolutions in Serbia and Ukraine. The MDC would gradually raise the pressure on the regime through non-violent acts of civil disobedience. Should this be met with violence, the MDC would nonetheless continue non-violent protests. This plan would put into effect the 'digm shift8 -- to a democratic resistance movement -- that the party had decided was needed following the election. The MDC would continue to openly contest elections but would use covert acts to force the GOZ to allow the elections to be free and fair. These actions would focus on the food and fuel shortages and would also seek to spark opposition to the government over other &trigger8 issues such as the proposed

changes to the constitution.

16. (C) Tsvangirai said the MDC would lead the &Broad Alliance<sup>8</sup> of democratic forces in these actions. The MDC had been debating internally how to respond to the elections. The debate had been largely over what role the MDC should play within the alliance. However, the failure of the recent stay-away had underscored the central role the MDC had to play if the populace were to respond. Tsvangirai acknowledged that not everyone in the party's leadership was prepared to sacrifice on the people's behalf, courting arrest and torture or worse. However, for this campaign to succeed the party's leaders would have to be seen to be taking risks upfront.

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International Role  
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17. (C) The CDA asked what role the MDC saw for the international community in its plans. Tsvangirai responded that U.S. support was critical not just in providing resources but in maintaining the government's continued isolation. He feared that many countries were in favor of a softer approach toward the GOZ and ZANU-PF and were prepared to reengage. The CDA said that may have been the case immediately after the election but was no longer the case with Operation Restore Order having done serious damage to the GOZ's international reputation.

18. (C) In response to the CDA's question, Tsvangirai said he had no plans to meet with SAG representatives while in Pretoria but would meet with COSATU and SACP representatives. The CDA noted that the outgoing SAG Ambassador had criticized Operation Restore Order (septel) and that Tsvangirai and the MDC might at least find parts of the SAG

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receptive to a renewed MDC approach.

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Comment  
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19. (C) Beyond a start date, there was little new in Tsvangirai's description of the MDC's plans for civil

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disobedience, most of which he had briefed us on during our last meeting in late May. However, what was new was a growing realization on his part that the lack of MDC activity, and especially its preoccupation with its internal politics, had cost the party credibility not just with Zimbabweans, but with the international community as well and with us in particular. In addition, we would note that in citing Serbia and Ukraine as examples, Tsvangirai overlooks that in both cases flawed elections were the key trigger event. We would argue that Operation Restore Order might also have served such a purpose in Zimbabwe. By contrast, we find it difficult to imagine tens of thousands taking to the streets in protest over constitutional changes. The MDC may very well have already missed their best chances to inspire widespread popular discontent.

SCHULTZ